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H. D. J.

THE RED RIVER OF THE NORTH.

“Wo an wohlgebahnten Strassen
Man in neuer Schenke weilt,
Wo dem Fremdling reichermassen
Ackerfeld ist zugetheilt,
Siedeln wir uns an mit andern.
Eilet, eilet, einzuwandern

In das neue Vaterland!
Heil dir, Fül rer! Heil dir, Bnad!”

—Goethe.

“I hear the tread of pioneers
Of nations yet to be,
The first low wash of waves where soon
Shall roll a human sea.”—Whittier.



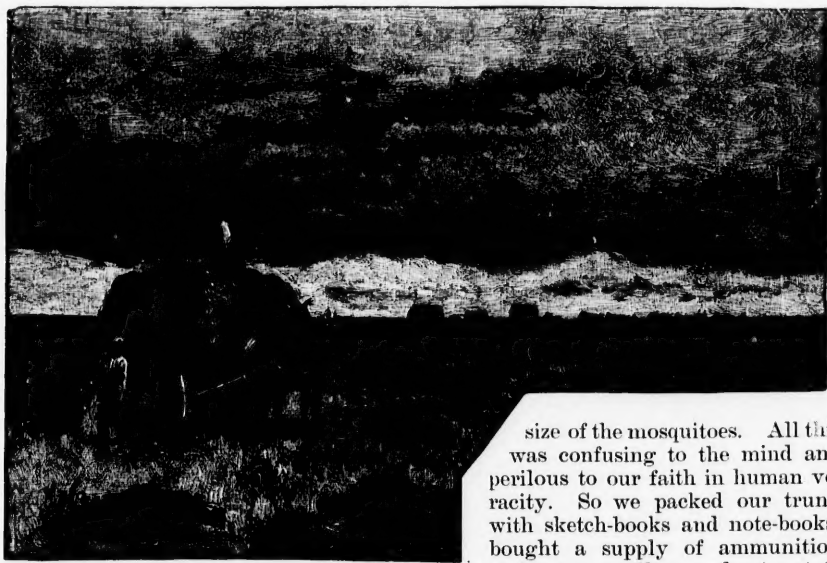
HEAD OF NAVIGATION, RED RIVER.

WE had come to the conclusion, Gad and I, that the only way to find out anything about the Red River and Manitoba was to go thither and behold with our own eyes; for it must be confessed that our virtuous attempts to prepare ourselves for the rôle of “intelligent travelers” had been a blank failure. We had

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HAYING ON THE PRAIRIE.

plunged into a fierce, omnivorous course of reading. We devoured everything that professed to contain any information about the Red River of the North, from Mayne Reid's *Young Voyageurs* down to the latest reports of the Canadian Immigration Department and the railway companies. What was the result? It worked like madness in the brain. For how was it possible, we reasoned, with the feeble incredulity of effete Eastern minds, that the same country should be at once a fertile garden and a howling wilderness; that it should be the happy hunting ground of the Indians, and the home of a large and industrious population; that the climate should be temperate and agreeable, while the mercury was frozen in the bulb, and the wind blowing at the rate of fifty miles an hour? These things puzzled us.

When we turned to our travelled acquaintances for enlightenment and help, we were baffled. For if the person questioned had heavy investments in the Red River Valley, we found that he had seen only those portions of it which were like paradise in summer weather. But if his interests were in Texas or Kansas, he had been impressed chiefly by the desolate aspect of the Red River country, the intense cold of the winters, and the enormous

size of the mosquitoes. All this was confusing to the mind and perilous to our faith in human veracity. So we packed our trunk with sketch-books and note-books, bought a supply of ammunition and a patent filter, and set out to see for ourselves.

On the westward journey we found many of our fellow-travellers bound for the same region. Some of them were going out as new settlers; some of them were "old" settlers who had been on a visit to the East, and were returning. They entered readily into conversation. It seemed to be a pleasure to them to talk—as, indeed, it is to all rational beings except Englishmen. They were frank and communicative in regard to their personal history. They were also given to large stories. It was sometimes a terrible strain on the listener's imagination. On one occasion I incautiously said to a loquacious old gentleman that I supposed they had some quite big farms out on the Red River.

"Big farms!" said he. "Great Scott! Why, there's farms out there bigger'n the hull State o' Rhode Island. A man starts out in the mornin' to plough a furrer, and he ploughs right ahead till night, an' then camps out, an' ploughs back the nex' day."

The expression of child-like innocence on Gad's face was sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought, and he silently felt for the filter.

We left St. Paul by the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railway, and rode all night in a northwesterly direction across the State of Minnesota. About

daybreak we came into the Red River Valley. Dismiss from your mind all the associations that are called up by this word. Understand that in the West a valley is not necessarily "a hollow between hills or mountains." That is a narrow Eastern conception. As we looked out from the car window for the first time upon this famous valley, we saw a broad level plain covered with short grass, and flooded by the rising sun with red and golden light. Doubtless there were hills somewhere in the world, but they were invisible. Far away on the left a dim blue line of timber marked the course of the Red River, and another line far in front of us indicated the approach of a tributary stream. This was all that broke the lake-like expanse. We realized at once what we had heard before, that it was in fact a lake without any water in it.

A few words will explain the character and probable formation of the Red River Valley. It is about three hundred miles long and fifty miles wide—a flat prairie, extending northward from Lake Traverse, in Minnesota, until it passes by a gentle slope beneath the water of Lake Winnipeg. About thirty miles north of the southern and higher extremity of the valley the Red River comes meandering in from the east. It is a sluggish stream, flowing in a ditch in the middle of the prairie, and is altogether inadequate in size and force to have made the valley which bears its name. When we seek an explanation of this vast alluvial plain, we must find a much larger body of water to account for its formation, and this is done by the theory which connects it with the great Mississippi system. There are many indications that the whole drainage of this region was at one time southward. The valley of the Mississippi, with its true line of continuation along the Minnesota, must have formerly contained a vastly larger body of water than now flows through it. This valley, beginning at Big Stone Lake, is separated only by a slight barrier from Lake Traverse. Now imagine that a few thousand years ago the level of the continent was a little different from what it is now, a few hundred feet higher at the north, and lower at the south, then this barrier would be overcome, and all the waters of the Winnipeg Basin would flow southward through the Red River and Minnesota Valley into the



MAP OF RED RIVER VALLEY.

Mississippi. The present northward outlet through the Nelson River would be stopped. There would be a mighty stream draining the whole central region of the continent into the Gulf of Mexico. Now imagine, again, that the continent is gradu-



BUILDINGS ON THE DALRYMPLE FARMS (THIRD SECTION).

ally depressed at the north, and elevated at the south—a change which we know from observation is still continuing along the sea-coast: the result of such an oscillation will be to diminish the slope and velocity of the great southward river. It will have less and less power to cut its way through obstacles. It will be dammed by the granite ledges near Big Stone Lake. It will spread out into a vast lake larger than Superior and Michigan put together. The waters of this lake will be shallow and muddy, and the deposit of alluvium very rapid. As the northward depression continues, the outlet toward the south will become more and more feeble. It will degenerate into a mere dribble. And at last the great body of water will cut a new channel northward into Hudson Bay. The Nelson River, with its rocky channel and numerous rapids, bears all the marks of an outlet thus recently formed.

This is but a rough and hasty outline of the theory which has been advanced by General G. K. Warren, of the United States Engineer Corps, and supported by him in a series of admirable reports. It may seem dry, but it offers an explanation of two very important facts—the immense fertility of this ancient lake bed, which is now called the Red River Valley, and the impossibility of a route from Manitoba, through the Nelson River and Hudson Bay, to England. These facts have a direct bearing on the commercial welfare of the United States, for they put the transportation of the products of the rich Northwest into the hands of our railways and steamboats.

More than two-thirds of the Red River

Valley lies in Minnesota and Dakota; the remaining third is in the British province of Manitoba. Two railroads have been opened into the valley within the past six years—the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba, which now runs parallel with the river to St. Vincent, on the British border, where it connects with the Pembina branch of the Canadian Pacific to Winnipeg, and the Northern Pacific, which crosses the valley at right angles, and opens up the wonderfully fertile land lying on the west side of the river, in Dakota. Into this territory a great flood of immigration is now pouring. The rapid influx began in 1877. In the last quarter of that year the government land-offices disposed of more than 400,000 acres in Minnesota, and during the same period the railways sold over 500,000 acres. In all, over a million acres were taken up by settlers in those three months, mostly in the Red River Valley. Since 1872 the Northern Pacific Railway has sold 800,000 acres of Red River lands. In the land districts traversed by this road the government has assigned 1,323,416 acres in the year ending June 30, 1878, and 1,964,644 acres in the year ending June 30, 1879. Together with the lands sold by the railway during the same time, this makes the astounding total of 4,500,000 acres disposed of in two years. Embracing the same territory, present statistics show the following: Present population, 69,600; increase in past year, 19,900. Area in wheat, 1879, 281,430 acres; increase, 96,000. Area in other crops, 79,470; increase, 20,660. Total area in cultivation, 360,900; increase, 116,660. New breaking, 1879, 133,600.

And now, if the intelligent reader has

carefully skipped these statistics, we will continue our narrative of travel. Casselton, in Dakota, on the Northern Pacific, was the first objective point which Gad and I desired to reach. Not that the town itself had anything to allure us. It is simply a cluster of wooden stores and

from the frightened Dutch holders in Amsterdam, when they were ready to sell at any price, and getting them transferred into land. The whole of this vast tract is under the personal supervision of Mr. Oliver Dalrymple—a tall, thin Yankee, with keen eye and firm mouth.



HAYING ON THE DALRYMPLE FARMS.

houses that have sprung up like huge misshapen mushrooms on the level prairie. But as we stood on the platform of the little railway station, we saw by the number of agricultural machines standing around the freight dépôt, and the farm wagons and teams of all descriptions driving in and out of town, that Casselton must be a "promising" place. The chief ground of its promise is undoubtedly the vicinity of the gigantic wheat farms, of which all the world has been talking and writing.

These farms have four great divisions, called after the men who have money invested in them—Grandin, Cass, Cheney, and Alton. They include in all 75,000 acres, 20,000 of which were in wheat this year. The original cost of the land was from forty cents to five dollars an acre. It is said that a large portion of it was obtained by buying Northern Pacific shares

The farms are cut up into divisions of 5000 acres, with a superintendent for each. These divisions are again divided into sections of 2500 acres. On each division there is a complete set of buildings, including a dwelling-house for the superintendent, a boarding-house for the hands, a stable, a granary, a blacksmith's shop, and a machine-house. There are mounted division foremen, and gang foremen, each of whom oversees twenty teams; there are over a hundred self-binding reapers and twenty steam-threshers employed. The horses and mules are numbered by hundreds. The men employed at harvest would make a little army. In fact, it is just that—the army system applied to agriculture. This general marshals his men, arrays his instruments of war, and with mechanical precision the whole force moves forward to conquer and exact rich tribute from the land.

We rode about over the farm with the courteous superintendent of one of the divisions. The air of the September morning was clear and keen. It had been cold enough during the previous night to make a quarter of an inch of ice. But there was life and vigor in every breath; plenty of ozone, or whatever that mysterious substance may be which makes men and horses happy and lively when they inhale it. The blue sky spanned a cloudless arch above us. There was not a fence nor a hill to break the prairie level. Southward we could see the timber-line of the Maple River, but on the north the horizon was smooth and unbroken—a slender rim of earth meeting the sky. The red barns and white houses of the divisions stood out high and distinct. There were broad stretches of the golden-brown grass of the yet unbroken prairies, vast fields of pale yellow stubble from which the harvest had already been gathered, and here and there fields in which the shocks were still standing, and the steam-thresher, *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*, devoured the remnant of the wheat.

"The fly-wheel with a mellow murmur turned,
While ever rising on its mystic stair,
In the dim light from secret chambers borne,
The straw of harvest, severed from the corn,
Climbed and fell over in the smoky air."

A little way off we saw a long line of teams pushing slowly across the boundless plain. They were ploughing. It was a very different sight from that ploughing which we have seen in the steep fields of New England, where Johnny steers the old horse carefully along the hill-sides, and the old man guides the plough as best he can through the stony ground; different, also, from that ploughing which Rosa Bonheur has painted so wonderfully in her picture at the Luxembourg, in which the French peasant drives his four-in-hand of mighty oxen, butting their way through the misty morning air. Here on this Western farm there were twelve sulky ploughs, each drawn by four mules, moving steadily along a two-mile furrow. The shining blades cut smoothly into the sod, and left a rich black wake of virgin earth behind them. As we looked out over the great plain, and slowly took in the extent, the fertility, the ease of cultivation, we echoed the local brag: "This is a big country, and don't you forget it!"

"Yes," said Gad, "that is the trouble: it's too big. I can't get it on canvas. A man might as well try to paint a dead calm in mid-ocean."

We spent an evening in the comfortable home of one of the superintendents, and heard him explain the system of book-keeping. Every man is engaged by contract, for a certain time, to do certain work, for certain wages. He receives his money on presenting to the cashier a time check certifying the amount and nature of his labor. The average price paid to hands is \$18 a month and board. In harvest they get \$2 25 a day. A record is kept by the foreman of the amount of wheat turned out by each thresher, by the driver of each wagon of the amount of wheat loaded by him, and by the receiver at the elevator of the amount of wheat brought in by each team. All the farm machinery and the provisions are bought at first hands for wholesale prices. Mules and horses are bought in St. Louis. Wheat is not stacked or stored, but shipped to market as rapidly as possible. Everything is regulated by an exact system, and this is what makes the farms a success.

Brains and energy in the man who controls them and in those whom he chooses as his subordinate officers—this is the secret of the enormous profits which have been made on the Dalrymple farms. The cost of raising the first crop is about \$11 an acre; each subsequent crop costs \$8. The average yield for this year was about nineteen bushels to the acre. This could be sold at Fargo on October 1 for 80 cents a bushel. A brief calculation will give you \$4 20 per acre profit on the new land, and \$7 20 for all the rest; or, say, \$130,000 gain on one crop. These figures I believe to be too small, rather than too large.

But does this large farming pay for the country? It absorbs great tracts of land, and keeps out smaller farmers. It employs tramps, who vanish when the harvest is over, instead of increasing the permanent population. It exhausts the land. The cultivation is very shallow. There is no rotation of crops. Everything is taken from the ground; nothing is returned to it. Even the straw is burned. The result of this is that the average crop from any given acre grows smaller every year, and it is simply a question of time under the present system how long it will take to exhaust the land.

A great many lies have been told about



HOMESTEAD CLAIM, RED RIVER VALLEY.

the Red River region—lies proportionate to the size of the country. It may not be out of place here to indicate a few of them. The water of this region is *not* good. In the rivers it is muddy; in the wells it is alkaline. The mosquitoes are large, vigorous, and active. For them, stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. They are a burden; and so, in certain seasons, is the grasshopper.

The climate is *not* mild. In fact, it is sometimes too cold for comfort, in spite of the protection afforded by the isothermal line. There is a strange reluctance on the part of the writers who describe this country to mention the figures marked by the thermometer in winter. The inhabitants also show a consummate skill in avoiding the subject.

"Pretty cold here in winter, eh?"

"Wa'al, ye-es; it's cold—but he'lthy!"

"Much snow?"

"Wa'al, no; ye see, it mos'ly blows away."

"How low does the thermometer go?"

"Wa'al, I dunno. Ye see, we live indoors, an' so we keep our'n thar."

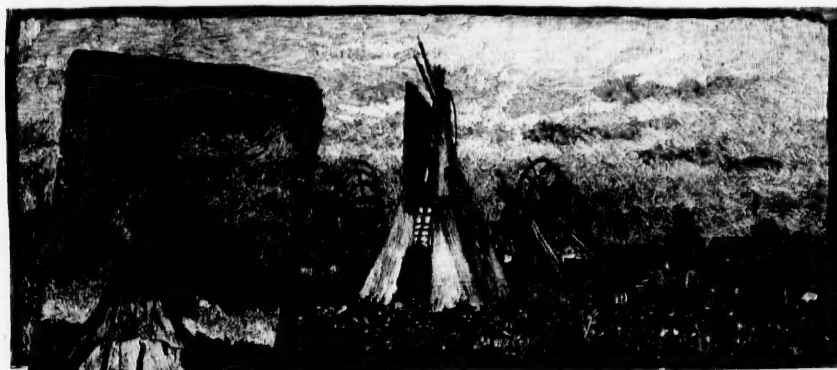
Another point on which the public has been much deceived is the average yield of wheat. I asked a very intelligent gentleman the other day what he supposed would be a good crop of wheat in the Red River Valley, and he answered, "Perhaps sixty bushels to the acre." In point of fact, forty bushels is an uncommonly fine yield, and the average is not much above twenty bushels. I have before me the returns from two of the divisions of the Dalrymple farms. The figures for the smaller one are as fol-

lows: 3338 acres in wheat yield 63,190 bushels; 200 acres in oats yield 7641 bushels; 120 acres in barley yield 2374 bushels.

The price of land in the vicinity of Casselton has rapidly increased. Railroad land is worth from \$10 to \$20 an acre; and there is little of it to be had. There is excellent government land, some miles back from the road, still unclaimed. Living is dear. Fuel is scarce and high. Wood costs \$5 50 a cord, and coal \$10 a ton.

Over against all these disadvantages you may set the simple fact that wheat can be raised here more easily and more profitably than anywhere else in the world. Here is a level plain. It does not need clearing, for there are no trees or stones; it does not need fencing, for there are but few cattle; and the herding laws must always afford strict and sufficient protection. All that it is necessary to do is to "break" the prairie sod to a depth of three or four inches in the spring, "backset" it in the fall, and in the following spring sow a bushel and a half of wheat to the acre, and reap twenty bushels at harvest.

From Casselton we returned to the east side of the Red River, and went northward along the valley. Everywhere we saw the same things. The level, fertile land; the wooden towns that have sprung up as if by magic along the railways; the agricultural machines standing at every dépôt; wagons loaded with sacks of wheat; cars receiving their freights of grain from the elevators beside the track—over all an air of prosperity and bustle which marks a new country. Some of the towns, like



INDIAN TENTS.

Fargo and Moorhead and Crookston, possess brick stores, which confer in this

region a sort of municipal aristocracy. Other towns have run down as rapidly as they once sprang up. Surely there is nothing so ghastly as new ruins, a row of dilapidated shanties, or a huge wooden hotel in which the want of custom is signified by the need of paint and the decay of window-shutters.

"The hall is dirty and broad and bare,
And never a guest goes up the stair;
The flies on the ceiling buzz and creep,
While the landlord sits in the bar asleep."

There is very little in these infant cities to please the eye or gratify the sense of beautiful order. The citizens have been too busy to make any attempts at adornment, or even to remove the debris of building operations from the streets. Everything has a crude, unfinished look. We could not expect it to be otherwise. And yet to the man who has lived in a picturesque New England village, or a well-built city, or even in an ordinarily pleasant country home in some older part of our country, there must be a constant uneasiness, a strong temptation to homesickness, when he arrives at one of these Red River towns. And if it be his fate to spend much time in the hotels of this region, he will be thoroughly unhappy. The misguided person who wrote that verse about finding his warmest welcome in an inn, never travelled through this valley.

Candor compels me to record that we found a happy exception to all this in the little hotel at Pembina. Blessings on you, Mrs. W——! for under your régime we found rest and comfort. It was your nimble needle also, O most excellent housewife, that repaired a distressing accident to my only pair of corduroys, and enabled me again to appear without disgrace in the company of civilized men.

Pembina is an ancient settlement. It was one of the first trading posts established in this region. The tame Indians still haunt the place. There is a United States military post on the western bank of the Red River, and a village of a few hundred inhabitants about half a mile away. Pembina has but small chance of growing to any great size, for there are five towns laid out here within a circle of as many miles; and St. Vincent in Minnesota and Emerson in Manitoba, both on the eastern bank of the Red River, have already outstripped their older neighbor. Everything depends upon the line of travel; and now the great highway on the western bank of the river, which was once the only route connecting Lord Selkirk's settlement with the civilized world, has been superseded by the railway.

It was at Pembina that we saw for the first time that famous vehicle of the country, the Red River cart. We were idling on the grassy bluff in front of the fort, enjoying the warm sunlight and the delicious air, when we beheld a caravan approaching. At the head came a Chipewa brave in his long blanket and best red leggings, trimmed with beads. The two points of his toilet upon which he had evi-

dently spent the most care were his hair and his legs. He was followed by two carts drawn by ponies of Gothic and despondent appearance. Beside them wandered two other ponies equally angular, two squaws with papposes slung at their backs, and a younger brave less picturesque than the patriarch. They halted

criminate and indescribable: a bundle of ragged bedding, a gun, an axe, tent poles, a canvas cover, cooking utensils, a buffalo-skin, a baby, and several puppies. These last were the only provisions visible; and the noble brave indicated that unless his white brother would help him, he and his offspring must endure the pangs of hun-



VIEW OF PEMBINA FROM THE RED RIVER.

near us, and while Gad was sketching the *tipi* and the family, I ventured to make a closer inspection of the carts.

The Red River cart is *sui generis*: it is an epitome of the history and description of a peculiar country. It is built on the model of the Normandy peasant's cart, and tells us at once that its inventors were of French descent. It is simply a light box with a pair of shafts, mounted upon an axle connecting two enormous wheels. There is no concession made to the aversion of the human frame to sudden violent changes of level; there is no weakness of luxury about this vehicle. The wheels are broad in the felloes, so as not to cut through the prairie sod. They are long in the spokes, so as to pass safely through fords and mud-holes. They are very much dished, so that they can be strapped together, and a rawhide stretched over them to make a boat. The whole cart is made of wood; there is not a bit of iron about it, so that, if anything breaks, the material to repair it is easily found. The axles are never greased, and they furnish an incessant answer to the old conundrum, "What makes more noise than a pig under a gate?"

The contents of the carts were indis-

ger for many days. This was probably a flight of barbaric fancy; but we gave him a little money, out of regard for his family, and his possible connection with our old friend Hiawatha, who belonged to the same tribe.

Some miles west of Pembina, on the British side of the boundary line, there is a large settlement of Russian Mennonites. The history of these people is full of interest. They are named after Menno Simons, who was a Romish priest in Friesland about the middle of the sixteenth century. He was not a man of high birth or education, but he seems to have had great natural strength of mind and character. He became convinced of the necessity of reformation in the Church, more particularly as regards the purity of life of Christians, and their separation from the world. He entered vigorously into the work of preaching and teaching his doctrines, and the result of his work was the formation of a sect of Baptist Quakers in Holland and North Germany who bore the name of Mennonites. They were peaceable and industrious citizens, willing to contribute money for the support of government even in war, but positively refusing to take an oath or to bear



MENNONITE HOUSES.

arms. In the course of time they became divided into several branches, more or less strict in their views. One of these divisions arose at the time when buttons were first introduced into general use. The stricter Mennonites regarded them as a worldly innovation, and, adhering to the use of hooks and eyes, were called "Hookers," in distinction from the more lax brethren, who were called "Buttoners." The first Mennonites came to this country among the Dutch settlers of New York; there was a Mennonite church built near Philadelphia in 1683, and the present number of the sect in the United States is estimated at 60,000. The Russian Mennonites are more recent immigrants. They were originally inhabitants of West Prussia, and emigrated to Russia in the latter part of the eighteenth century, having obtained a promise from the Emperor Paul that they should not be called upon for military service. This promise was revoked by the present Emperor, and they were informed that they must prepare for army duty in 1881, or else leave the country. Large numbers of them decided to come to America. Kansas and Minnesota have received considerable colonies, and about 7000 have come to Manitoba, where the government has reserved 500,000 acres for their settlements.

It was a beautiful morning when we set out on a "prairie yacht," behind a pair of quick-stepping horses, to visit the Mennonite Reserve. Our road lay along the north bank of the Pembina River, skirting the edge of the timber, and occasion-

ally cutting across a point of woods which ran out into the open prairie. We passed many thrifty-looking farms, where the men were still working at the remnant of the harvest. At Smuggler's Point there was a log tavern, and we stopped for a little dinner. The landlord was a frontiersman who had tried life in many territories. We asked him whether the Mennonites were good settlers, and how he liked them.

"Well," he said, "they're quiet enough; and some on 'em lives pretty white; but they ain't no good to the country. They live on black bread and melons, and raise their own tobacker; and when a crowd on 'em comes in here to drink, each man steps up and drinks, and *pays for his own liquor.*"

Such conduct as this, of course, is subversive of the very first principle of American society, which recognizes "treating" as the true medium of friendly intercourse.

A few miles farther on we found the farm village of Blumenort. It is not the largest of the villages on this reserve, but it will serve as a type of the rest. The high-road was simply a well-worn wagon track over the bare plain. An irregular line of a dozen low thatched houses on each side of the road and a steam saw-mill made up the village. The farms radiate from this centre. Every man cultivates his own land, and the four-and-twenty families have the advantage of living close together, and making common front against the hardship and loneliness of frontier life. Each village has its head-man, or *Schutz*—its school-mas-

ter—who teaches in German; and if the village is too small for a church, the *Pfarrer* comes over from some larger town to preach at stated times.

We sat on the steps of the mill, talking with some of the villagers, and eating a water-melon, which was passed around from man to man for each to cut off a slice with his pocket-knife. The Mennonite German is a barbarous dialect; it has not been improved by ninety years' sojourn in Russia. But it served as a medium of communication. They told us that their village had been unfortunate; that they had been forced to move

The men expressed some anxiety to know if Sitting Bull were coming to make war in Manitoba. They had heard that he was marching with four thousand braves to attack Emerson. They seemed much relieved to hear that he was many hundred miles to the west of them.

On the other side of the road I saw a clay threshing-floor between some wheat stacks, and an old man driving a team of horses over it to tread out the grain. The method was old-fashioned enough to be quite a novelty. I went over to watch it, and thus chanced to make the acquaintance of the proprietor of the stacks and



A MENNONITE INTERIOR.

twice on account of the wetness of the land. The present situation seemed to be better. They like the country better than Russia. But one of the men, who had not yet taken up his allotment of land, complained greatly that under the new law, made this summer, he could get only eighty acres of homestead. He thought of going to America (*i. e.*, the United States), where he could get one hundred and sixty acres. "But how about the oath of allegiance?" we asked. He shrugged his shoulders and grinned, from which we concluded that he must be a Buttoner of the looser stamp.

the horses. He was a pleasant, talkative old man, who had come from Russia within a year, and was just beginning to make a home for himself. This was his first crop, and he thought it would average over twenty bushels to the acre. Three or four barefooted girls, ruddy and strong, were brushing up the grain as the horses trod it out, and winnowing it. The scene was picturesque, and I called Gad over to make a sketch of it. But something in his dark and rolling eye, or some natural timidity, sent the maidens scampering off to hide behind the stacks, from which they made rapid sallies to gather up a little

wheat in their aprons. Meanwhile the old farmer was asking many questions. He was particularly anxious to know the value of Russian money in New York, for he still had a little stock of rubles which he had brought with him from his old home. The Mennonites are, almost without exception, well-to-do people. What is the mysterious connection between the doctrine of non-resistance and worldly prosperity? Why do they always go together?

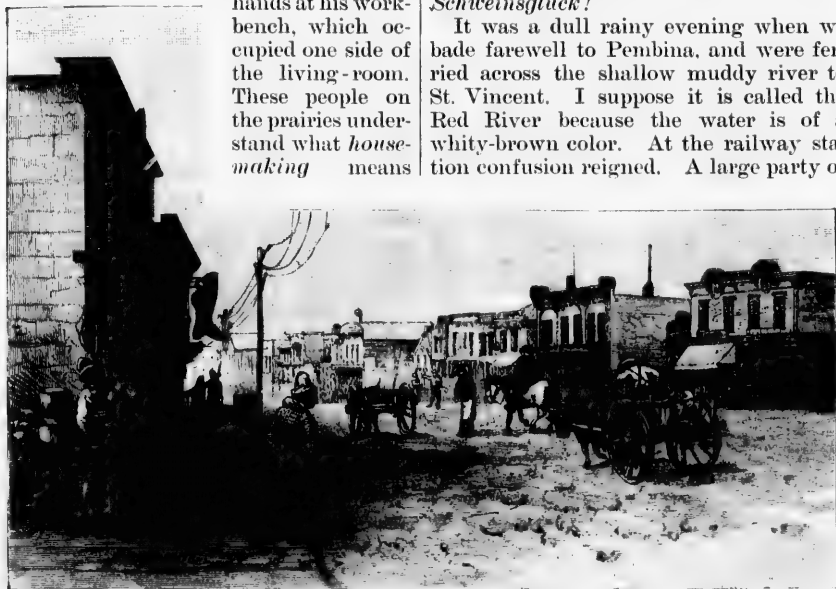
After a while Brother Peters asked us to go home with him, and see his house, which was but a few yards away from the threshing-floor. It was built of logs, plastered with clay, and thatched with straw. The chimney was a square hole in the roof. The inside of the house was rough, but comfortable, or at least it might be made so. The floor was made of clay. Peters was particular to impress upon us that the house was not finished; he had bought the shell, as it stood, from another man, and he pointed out with admirable pride how he proposed to wall off a *Gastzimmer* here and a *Speisezimmer* there. The central point of the establishment was the great oven, which answered at once for purposes of cooking the food and warming the rooms. All improvements in the place the old man intended to make

with his own hands at his work-bench, which occupied one side of the living-room. These people on the prairies understand what *house-making* means

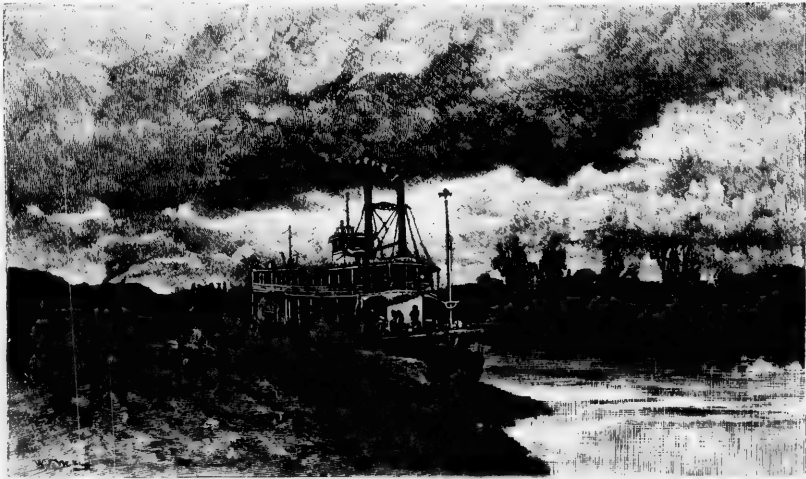
very much better than the dwellers in cities can possibly understand it. We dabble in the refinements of decorative art, and fret ourselves because a color does not harmonize or a line is out of symmetry. It is, after all, only a question of what kind of veneer we shall use to cover the frame-work of life. The men and women of the frontier touch the solid facts of existence. They have to face the problem—*given a prairie and a pile of lumber, how to make a house?*

As we sat there in that rude room talking with the old Russian, puffing away quietly at a pipe of the peace-making Indian weed, we seemed to have entered quite into the circle of his domestic life. In one corner of the room sat the old *Hausfrau* combing her scanty locks. The eldest daughter was very busy with some household work, while the little grandchild played on the floor beside the work-bench. In the middle of the room was the dinner table; presently three or four girls came in from their work, and we were cordially asked to sit down with them to their *Vesperbrod* of black bread, melons, and coffee. When we went away the old man invoked many blessings on us, and we promised to send him a copy of *Harper's Magazine*. Here's a greeting to you, Peters. May you have *Schweinsglück!*

It was a dull rainy evening when we bade farewell to Pembina, and were ferried across the shallow muddy river to St. Vincent. I suppose it is called the Red River because the water is of a whity-brown color. At the railway station confusion reigned. A large party of



STREET VIEW IN CITY OF WINNIPEG.



STEAMBOAT LANDING ON THE RED RIVER.

immigrants had just arrived with through tickets by the steamboat line to Winnipeg. But owing to the lowness of the water, and an accident which occurred a few weeks before, there was no boat ready to go down the river. The party must go on by rail, and the officers of the branch line from St. Vincent to St. Boniface, opposite Winnipeg, refused to make any allowance for the steamboat tickets. Despair ruled in the crowded, murky car into which we were packed. Many of the poor immigrants could ill afford the additional cost. We had to pay \$3 25 for riding over sixty-five miles of wretched track at the rate of ten miles an hour. The road-bed is so rough that when they run at higher speed, the engine bell is rung by the oscillation.

Long after midnight we were landed in the mud at St. Boniface. Here we fell into the hands of the custom-house Philistines. Never have I seen courtesy and intelligence so successfully concealed under a veil of rude stupidity. Gad stood by in the cold damp gloom, and gave vigorous expression to his feelings in four different languages, while the officer of customs ploughed through our carefully packed trunk, upsetting our gun trappings, and sniffing at paint tubes, until at last he concluded to detain the luggage on suspicion, and we went off wearily to find our way across the river to Winnipeg. We arrived finally at the (so-called)

"best hotel in town." May a kind fortune preserve us from the worst!

Morning light revealed to us the metropolis of the Northwest. We saw a broad main street bordered with high wooden sidewalks, and rows of shops of every shape and size. Some were rude wooden shanties; others were fine buildings of yellow brick. High over all towered the handsome spire of the Knox Church. Several saw and grist mills sent up incessant puffs of white steam into the clear air. The street was full of bustle and life. There were wagons of all descriptions standing before the stores. Long lines of Red River carts were loading with freight for the interior. The sidewalks were filled with a miscellaneous crowd of people: German peasants, the women in dark blue gowns and head kerchiefs, the men marked by their little flat caps; French half-breeds, with jaunty buckskin jackets, many-colored scarfs around their waists, and their black hair shining with oil; Indians, dark, solemn, gaunt, stalking along in blanket and moccasins; Scotch and English people, looking as they do all the world over, but here, perhaps, a little quicker and more energetic. The middle of the street, though there had been but a single night of rain, was a vast expanse of mud—mud so tenacious that the wheels of the wagons driving through it were almost as large as mill-wheels; and when we dared

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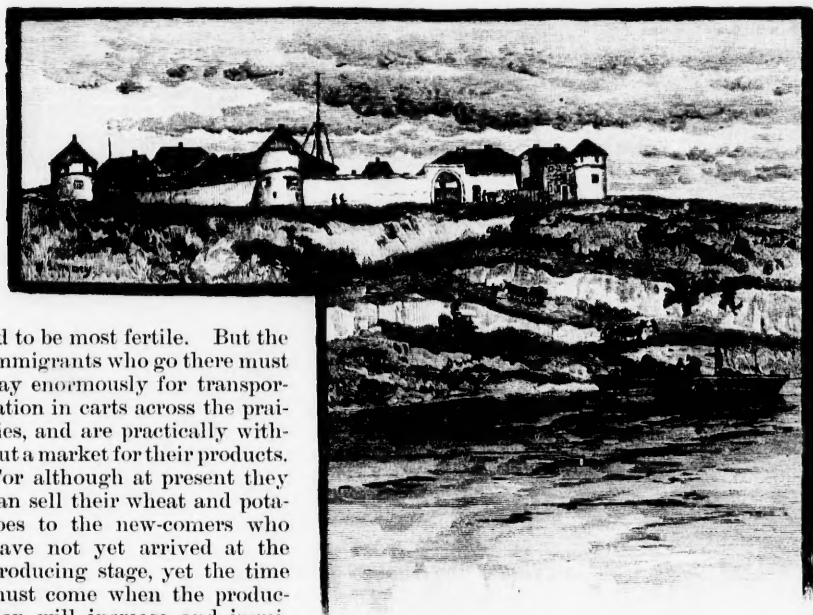
"IS THAT MY HOMESTEAD, OR LAKE WINNIPEG?"

to cross it, we came out on the other side with much difficulty, and feet of elephantine proportions.

The city of Winnipeg, which eight years ago was nothing more than a cluster of houses about the Hudson Bay Company's fort, now contains over seven thousand inhabitants. It is the distributing centre for a large region, a place of great business activity, and so situated in relation to the back country and the facilities for transportation that it is sometimes called "the Bleeder's Paradise." It is built on a clay bank at the junction of the Assiniboine with the Red River. The nature of the soil is such that it is difficult to find a good foundation for a house, and many of the larger buildings have settled and cracked.

We had the driest time of the year for our visit, but in the course of our excursions about the town we were impressed by the general wetness of the land. In fact, it was very forcibly brought home to our consciousness, for we almost succeeded in bogging a fine horse as we were driving home one day through the back streets of the city. Those prairie bogholes are deceptive. They often look dry, but they have no bottom. When a Winnipegger gets his wagon stuck in one of them, he loosens the traces and lets the horses scramble out; and then, pulling off his clothes, goes in to extricate the vehicle, which, by the skillful use of ropes, he usually accomplishes. Our personal explorations in Manitoba were not thorough enough to enable us to speak of the gener-

al character of the land, and indeed no amount of travel at this season of the year would have qualified us to give a fair description. But all travellers who have gone through the country in the spring and early summer speak of it as being very rich, but very much under water. The lower part of the Red River Valley has always been subject to inundation. In August, 1877, the roads were so impassable, and conveyances so dear, that it was difficult to go outside of Winnipeg, and in consequence many people who had come to settle in the province went back discouraged. This year one hundred and forty Mennonite families were forced to remove from the Red River Reserve because the land was too wet to cultivate. Professor Hind, whose report is standard authority, says: "The country possessing a mean elevation of 100 feet above Lake Winnipeg... may be estimated at 70,000 square miles, of which nine-tenths are lake, marsh, or surface rock of Silurian or Devonian age." Along the banks of the Red River and the Assiniboine the land is somewhat drier and better, but it is all taken up by the so-called Settlement Belt, which is expressly excepted from the homestead provisions of the Dominion Lands Act. As a result of all this, most of the immigrants are forced to go further west, to Portage la Prairie or beyond, where the land is higher and not in need of drainage. Still further away, in the Northwest Territory, along the Little Saskatchewan and the Big Saskatchewan, the country is report-



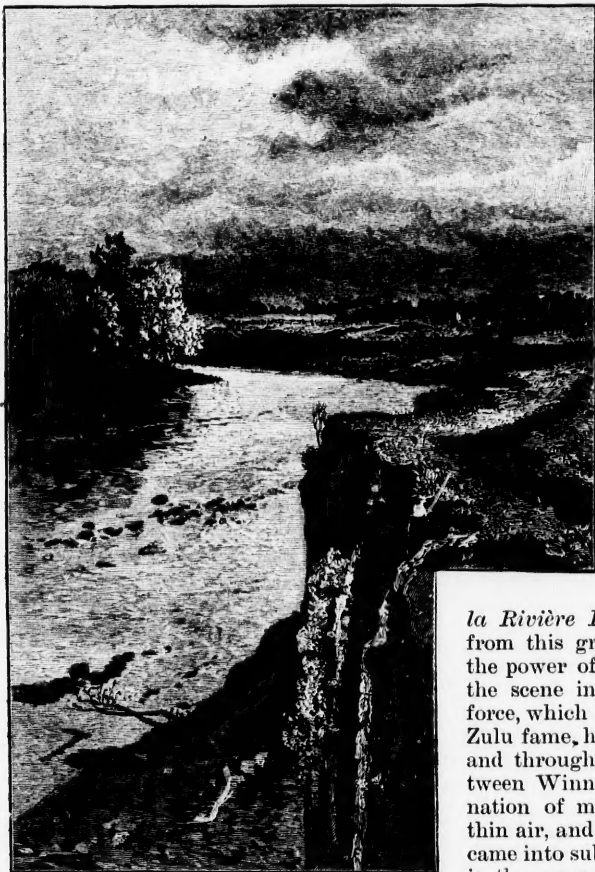
FORT GARRY.

ed to be most fertile. But the immigrants who go there must pay enormously for transportation in carts across the prairies, and are practically without a market for their products. For although at present they can sell their wheat and potatoes to the new-comers who have not yet arrived at the producing stage, yet the time must come when the production will increase and immigration decrease until the local market is oversupplied, and then farming will be neither amusing nor profitable. The Canadian Pacific Railway will, of course, remove this difficulty; but it is hard to say where it will run or how soon it will be finished. The hopes of the people are set upon the completion of this road, and thus far they seem to find no trouble in living on hopes and growing fat withal.

The immigration into Manitoba has been astonishingly rapid. Two causes have recently operated to check it. A great deal of the best land in the province is excepted from the homestead provisions of the Land Act by a complicated system of reserves. For instance, a belt of five miles on either side of the proposed railway line is only open to purchasers at six dollars an acre. The second and still greater obstacle is the law passed in July last, practically limiting the homestead grant to eighty acres. It is absurd to suppose that settlers will content themselves with this amount when they can get 160 acres of equally good land under similar conditions by simply crossing the imaginary line which divides the British Possessions from the United States. In the light of these facts it was amusing to read a quotation from a speech made in September

last, at an agricultural dinner, by Lord Beaconsfield, in which he gravely stated that nearly all of the largest land-holders in the extreme western States of America had sold out their farms and gone to seek a living in the new Canadian territory. As an effort of the Oriental imagination, this was excellent; but as history, it was amazingly incorrect. The immigrants into Manitoba, with the exception of the Mennonites, have been almost without exception British subjects, and a very large majority of them have come from the province of Ontario. Large numbers, being dissatisfied, have recrossed the line, and settled in Dakota and Minnesota. In Pembina County alone the number of Canadians is reckoned at one-half of the population.

The most interesting object in Winnipeg—perhaps we may say the only thing which has anything of the picturesque about it—is Fort Garry, the head-quarters of “the Governor and company of adventurers of England trading into Hudson’s Bay.” It stands well up above the swift, muddy current of the Assiniboine. Seen from the opposite bank of the river in the lingering glow of an amber twilight, there



ASSINIBOINE RIVER.

is an air of antiquity and romance about the rough gray wall, pierced by a low gateway, and flanked by rude turrets which lean as if they had heard of Pisa, and were trying to introduce the graces of civilization into the wilderness. Here the blue banner of the Hudson Bay Company has floated for many years above the little quadrangle where the white man and the red man have met to barter the products of Europe for the skins of the wild north land. "*Pro pelle cutem*," skin for skin, is the motto of the Company, and many a poor fellow has paid for his gains in peltry by losing his own scalp at last. Millions of skins have been gathered from the lonely forest and the frozen waste into these low dark store-houses. Ship-loads of cloth and beads and powder and fire-

water have passed over these battered counters to civilize the Indian. Here the Governor of the Company once ruled over the land of Assiniboia. Here the half-breeds gathered themselves in 1869 to resist the authority of the Canadian government. It was the dream of their leader, Louis Riel, to found a nation of mixed races, and that sensational love of liberty which runs in the Gallic blood spoke in its native language and after its ancient fashion here in this far wilderness. It sounds like an echo of Paris to read the deliverances of the *Comité National des Métis de*

la Rivière Rouge which were issued from this gray old fort. But at last the power of Great Britain arrived on the scene in the shape of a military force, which Colonel Wolseley, now of Zulu fame, had led across the swamps and through the trackless forests between Winnipeg and Montreal. The nation of mixed races vanished into thin air, and the province of Manitoba came into substantial being. This was in the summer of 1870, and since then the old fort has fallen into the humdrum of a mere commercial life.

The Red River at Winnipeg is about a hundred yards wide. The gray and rugged Cathedral of St. Boniface still stands on the eastern bank, and the bells of the Roman mission still "call from their turrets twain." But the "voyageur" no longer sweeps along the current and hears their far-off vesper chiming. Twenty years ago the first steamboat puffed its way down the river, and the silent-gliding canoe fleets have vanished. There is nothing of hardship or adventure about a voyage on the Red River now, and it was simply in the interest of physical comfort, and for the sake of variety, that we chose to leave Winnipeg by water. The *Minnesota* was run up alongside of the steep bank (for in this country they do not need wharves), and we embarked for St. Vin-

passed over red counters the Indian. Governor of pany once the land of . Here the gathered s in 1869 to authority of dian govern- t was the their leader. l, to found a mixed races, sensational liberty which e Gallic blood its native land after its an- tion here in ilderness. It ke an echo of read the deliv- of the *Comité l des Métis de* n were issued . But at last in arrived on of a military elsey, now of ss the swamps ess forests be- ontréal. The vanished into ce of Manitoba ng. This was and since then into the hum- cial life. ipeg is about a e gray and rug- ace still stands the bells of the from their tur- yageur" no lon- rent and hears ning. Twenty boat puffed its he silent-gliding . There is noth- ure about a voy- , and it was sim- cal comfort, and hat we chose to The *Minnesota* the steep bank ey do not need ked for St. Vin-

cent. The craft was peculiar. In the air she was quite majestic, with her two stories and double smoke-stacks. But under water she was only a flat-boat with a draught of two feet. A huge "kick-behind" wheel extended completely across the stern, and made the boat shake as if with the palsy when we turned out from the bank and headed up stream. The river flowed with a still, muddy current, between high banks covered with bushes and small timber. Here and there we saw a clearing and some tumble-down cabins, the homes of the half-breeds. They are a strange race, in whose veins the blood of England, Scotland, and France is mingled with that of the Indian tribes. They are social, fond of excitement, gifted with great physical strength and endurance, but without the moral qualities of patience, industry, and order. In olden times they were the canoe-men and sledge-drivers of the Hudson Bay Company. We saw their clumsy dug-outs moored along the river-banks, and the numerous set lines indicated that they preferred the easiest possible way of fishing. Flocks of wild-duck and plover flew before us as we steamed slowly against the current, passing around sharp curves in the river, and almost doubling on our course. King-fishers perched motionless on the over- hanging branches, or swept swiftly past with their sharp chir-r-r-ing cry. The boat struck on many a stone and sand-bar; but with a convulsive shiver that made all the wood-work crack, and a tremendous splashing of the great wheel, she scraped safely over. Then the dusk gathered on the stream and on the brown woods, and the light faded in the clear sky, until the moon came swimming over the tree-tops, and all was silver bright as we floated on, ever rounding new points only to see the same curve of water, the

same motionless banks, stretching away before us. At sunrise we looked out upon the same picture, and at noon our voyage was ended at St. Vincent.

The chronicle of our Red River trip would be incomplete if it lacked the record of our stay at the town of Hallock—a town small in population, large in hopes, and abundant in prairie-chickens. How shall I describe the primitive state of society in that infant city? how do justice to the excellence of the shooting, and more particularly to the great excitement of the impromptu dog-fight, especially at that moment when, in a peaceable desire to separate the contestants, I kicked the wrong dog? But at last all came to an end, and we were riding homeward for the last time across the prairie. The vast plain was golden brown in the light of the autumn sun. Here and there a great square of black earth was exposed in a new "breaking." Far away to the west we could see a faint blue line of timber. On the nearer woods that fringed the banks of Two Rivers the hues of the declining year were rich and sombre. Flocks of prairie-chickens went whirling away before us, with their clucking note that sounds like derisive laughter. High up in the air a long flock of wild-geese was moving swiftly across the sky. Over all hung the mellow haze of Indian summer. There was a strange soft beauty in the scene, like that which rests upon the sea in a golden calm. And as the haze grew thicker, the sun sank lower and lower, like a ball of molten iron slowly cooling, until at last it was lost in the gathering gloom. Then the yellow stars came out with tremulous light. The smell of fallen leaves was in the air. And on the far horizon, rising and falling, sinking and flaring up again, burned a red line of prairie fires.

